



Exploring Redwood Creek



“West 6 miles principally along a ridge brushy and timbered with Hemlock, Pine (Douglas fir) and Cedar (coast redwood). Some of the Cedars was (sic) the noblest trees I had ever seen being 12 or 15 feet in diameter tall and straight and handsome. I encamped in a prairie (sic) with the Ocean in sight.” May 19, 1828.

From the journal of Jedediah Smith while camped in Gan’s Prairie above Redwood Creek.

Revisiting the Past

The noble trees described by explorer Jedediah Smith and his clerk Harrison Rogers on their adventure through northwest California came close to disappearing from the Redwood Creek valley. In 1828, this forest was almost impenetrable to the motley party of 18 mountain men and over 250 mules and horses. From Gan’s Prairie, they journeyed north through the mountainous, foggy, wet home of the Yurok and Chilula peoples who had lived along lower Redwood Creek for thousands of

years. Ultimately, the Smith expedition and the discovery of gold on the Trinity River in 1848 led to the invasion and settlement of the area by Americans in the 1850s. In the ensuing years, thousands of acres of ancient forests were cut to allow for farms and to provide lumber for communities. In 1963, the discovery of the then tallest known tree in Tall Trees Grove helped to save the remaining old-growth stands along Redwood Creek, culminating in the creation of Redwood National Park by Congress in 1968.

Parklands Today



Today a journey along Redwood Creek reflects dramatic change. You will see fertile green hillsides that represent park restoration work — bulldozers have removed logging roads and placed tons of soil back up the slope. Vegetation comes back on its own. Still, a close look reveals logging leftovers. Second-growth forests have replaced ancient streamside redwoods and erosion into the creek has produced high gravel bars. Silt in the creek makes it hard for salmon eggs to survive. Still, Redwood Creek contains many areas of serene natural

beauty. Explore narrow, steep-walled side streams. Swim in clear pools and camp along sun-baked gravel bars. You may see a black bear, a herd of elk, a flock of mergansers, diving ospreys, scurrying mink, or a family of otters. Enjoy the freedom to wander through magnificent groves of towering, handsome redwoods. Redwood Creek is a place to experience nature’s beauty and renew the spirit; and to witness the parks’ active efforts to speed the processes that will return the noble forest to the valley.

On the Trail



Redwood Creek is a powerful and dangerous river during high water flows. From October to May, check with rangers for water conditions before crossing.



Hiking on the gravel bars is inaccessible 3½ miles upstream from Tall Trees Trail.



Mountain lions, black bears, Roosevelt elk, ticks, and poison oak are found along Redwood Creek. Please take proper precautions.



These parks are natural environments; the wild animals, plants, streams, and other natural features, as well as certain weather conditions that occur here, can be dangerous.

The Trails of Redwood Creek

Redwood Creek Trail

Trailhead: ½ mile up Bald Hills Road
Distance: 8 miles one way
Camping: Dispersed camping along the gravel bars allowed: you must be beyond the first seasonal bridge and no closer than ¼ mile of the Tall Trees Grove.
Description: Once the site of a lumber mill, now a regenerating forest and riparian corridor. Bridges at the 1½-mile mark and to access the Tall Trees Trail are in place only in the summer, usually June to September.

Orick Horse Trail

Trailhead: Check at a visitor center.
Distances: Four loops: Ridge loop–7 miles, McArthur Creek loop–14 miles (this loop has two picnic areas both with a hitching post, pit toilet, and picnic table), Elam Creek loop–20 miles, Forty-Four Creek loop–32 miles.
Camping: Designated camping at 44 Camp** and Elam Creek.
**44 Camp is open to BACKPACKERS ONLY at this time; no water is available.
Description: These loops offer views of the ocean and Orick valley as the trail climbs up a ridge and into the forest.

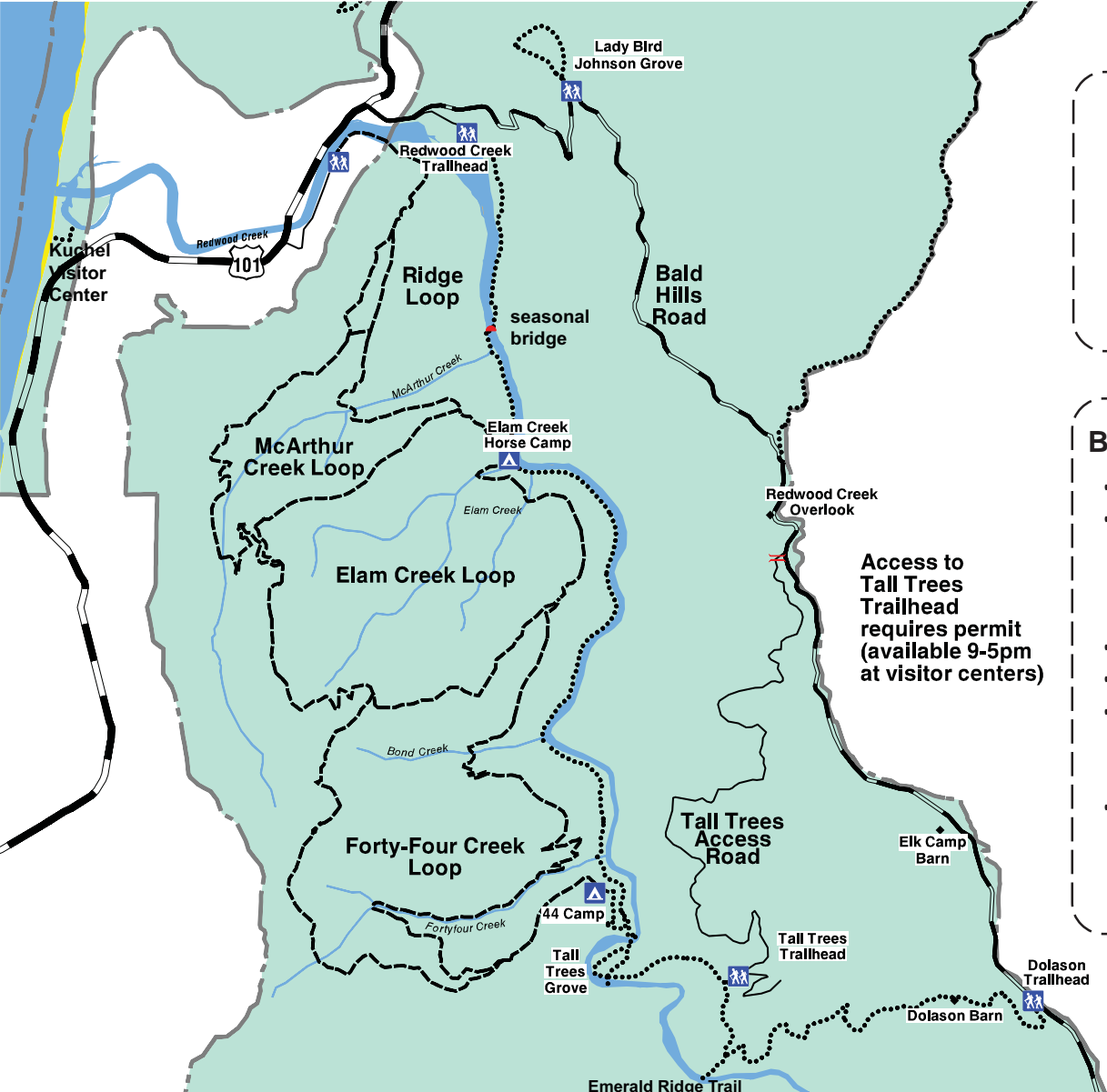
Tall Trees Trail - permit required for gate

Trailhead: Tall Trees Access Road 6½ miles up Bald Hills Road; travel another 6½ miles along this gravel road to the trailhead
Permit required: Available at visitor centers
Distance: 1½ miles one way to the grove; descends 680 feet; grove loop is an additional ½ mile.
Camping: Dispersed camping along the gravel bars allowed: camp no closer than ¼ mile of the Tall Trees Grove.
Description: Steep climb to some of the tallest trees in the world. About 100 yards from the trailhead, the Emerald Ridge Trail branches off to the left and connects to Dolason Trail or drops 580 feet to Redwood Creek.

Dolason Prairie Trail

Trailhead: 11 miles up Bald Hills Road
Distance: 5 miles one way
Camping: No camping allowed
Description: Pass through wildflower studded prairies, past a restored historic sheep barn, and into magnificent redwood forest known as the *Emerald Mile*; connects to Emerald Ridge and Tall Trees Trails.

Backcountry Basics: For details on backcountry camping, pick up our Backcountry Basics brochure and talk to a ranger about trail conditions, water levels, and regulations.



Legend

Horse Trail / Hiking Trail

Hiking Only Trail

Redwood National and State Parks Boundary

U.S. Highway 101

Paved Road

Unpaved Road

Backcountry Rituals:

Treat water

Bury human waste 100 feet from water in a hole 6-8 inches deep

Pack out garbage

Store food properly

Check at a visitor center for creek levels

Fires restricted to established fire pits (except on Redwood Creek gravel bars).

